

## CHAPTER TWO

# RECREATION NEEDS, ISSUES, THE COMMUNITY SURVEY & VISION STATEMENT

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Existing and anticipated recreation needs for New Scandia Township will be addressed in this chapter by analyzing relevant demographic characteristics and reviewing general recreation trends. Specific information regarding recreation needs will be provided, as indicated in part by feedback generated from the 2004 New Scandia Township Community Survey. The Community Survey will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

As part of the process of building the Comprehensive Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Plan, the New Scandia Township Park and Recreation Committee crafted a vision statement to help guide the Township in the development, maintenance and enhancement of its park system. The vision statement is included at the conclusion of this chapter.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

New Scandia Township is roughly 35 miles north of the Twin Cities. It borders Chisago Lake Township and Franconia Township in Chisago County to the north, the Lower St. Croix Scenic Riverway to the east, May Township to the south and the City of Forest Lake to the west. William O'Brien State Park is located within the Township's southeast corner. The northern-most portion of Big Marine Regional Park Preserve is located in the southwest quarter of the Township.

State Highway 97 provides access to 35W and Minneapolis-Saint Paul. State Highway 95 provides north/south access running along the St. Croix River and its communities. County Roads 3 and 15 also extend north/south through the Township. Much of the existing development is along or near these transportation corridors and around the lakes.

Many people are drawn to New Scandia Township for its strong rural character, abundance of lakes and open space and relative proximity to the metropolitan region.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The Comprehensive Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Plan should adequately address the needs and desires of Township residents, now and in the future. This section analyzes key characteristics of those who will use New Scandia Township facilities.

### POPULATION GROWTH

In 2004 the Metropolitan Council estimated the population of New Scandia Township to be approximately 3,970 people; the population is projected to reach 5,000 residents between 2017 and 2020. New Scandia Township's population growth may affect parks, trails, open space and recreational facilities in several ways:

1. Pressure to develop in rural and natural areas will increase. Consequently, without proper planning the rural character that attracted many residents to New Scandia Township may be lost.
2. The need to provide additional recreation facilities will increase.
3. Park dedication and fees in lieu of dedication will increase as new subdivisions and development occurs.

*Statistics from the Metropolitan Council showed the 2004 population of New Scandia Township to be 3,970. The Met Council predicts that between 2017 and 2020, the population will likely be 5,000 – an increase of 26%.*

### POPULATION DENSITY

Many residents of New Scandia Township are located in or near the Village Center and Village Center Expansion (just south of the Village Center) as identified in the 1998 New Scandia Comprehensive Plan. Within the township, land adjacent to State Highways 97 and 95 and in close proximity to several of the lakes are also more densely populated.

### AGE DISTRIBUTION

Recreation activities are used and enjoyed by people of all age groups. Generally speaking, younger people favor active types of recreation, like water sports, skateboarding and baseball. Older people may favor more passive recreation, including walking, birding and picnicking.

*The State Demographer predicts that as we approach the year 2020, the percentage of people over 65 will increase and the percentage of people under the age of 19 will decrease.*

The 2000 census showed that approximately 29% of the population of New Scandia Township was under the age of 20 and roughly 9% was over the age of 65. The State Demographer is projecting that as we approach the year 2020, the percentage of people over the age of 65 will increase and the percentage of people under the age of 20 will decrease. However, the Township is in growth mode, it may not age like a fully developed community. This may affect the types of recreation facilities that New Scandia Township develops.

Particular age groups may be associated with specific areas of the Township. For example, senior housing is located just west of the Village Center. Concentrations of families with young children are generally associated with neighborhoods that have “starter” homes, located in new developments throughout the Township. Consequently, recreation facilities should relate to the likely users of the facilities.

### **PARK USERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

New Scandia Township’s parks, trails, open space and recreational facilities should provide recreation opportunities for all users – including those with special needs, whether it’s physical or mental disabilities. People with special needs have the same interests as the general population, but many encounter barriers when participating in recreation activities.

It is a popular misconception that people with disabilities make up a very small percentage of the population. The 2000 Census indicated that roughly 10% of NST residents between 5 to 20 years of age have a disability, as does almost 16% of the population between 21 to 64 years of age. Approximately 34% of people in the Township over 65 years old have a disability. As the population continues to grow and age, this percentage will increase. Every effort should be made to make all parks, trails, open space and recreational facilities in New Scandia Township barrier-free to meet the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### **PARK USE FROM NON-RESIDENTS**

Residents are the primary users of New Scandia Township’s parks, trails, open space and recreation facilities. However, the Township offers recreation opportunities that attract people from around the region. New Scandia’s proximity to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, its rural character and its high percentage of existing open space provide unique recreation opportunities. In particular, visitors come to New Scandia Township to enjoy the many water-related recreation activities offered by the Lower St. Croix River and the area’s many lakes. In addition to boating and fishing,

visitors find an opportunity to ride horseback, snowmobile, hunt and explore the historical Swedish settlement.

New Scandia Township should recognize that some recreation facilities have potential to attract people from around the area. This can benefit the Township, especially if planned properly. New Scandia Township should continue to work with adjacent communities, the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Washington County when considering recreation facilities that may draw people from around the region.

## **COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES**

It is the primary responsibility of New Scandia Township to provide its residents with a park system that meets their requirements. However, others - including area school districts - can and do help address park and recreation needs. This section provides an overview of potential collaboration to ensure that the Township's park system needs are met.

### **OTHER GOVERNMENT ENTITIES**

The Township's park system can benefit (and has) through collaborations with other government entities including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Metropolitan Council, Washington County and neighboring communities. Parks with special or regional significance, regional trails or local trails with regional connections and significant open spaces hold great opportunities for collaborative efforts that would not only benefit New Scandia Township, but also the region.

### **SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

New Scandia Township residents are served by Forest Lake Area School District 831 and Chisago Lakes School District 2144. Both School Districts provides recreation opportunities for students and all residents in the districts. Although schools are not Township parks, residents of New Scandia Township use the recreation facilities at schools and participate in recreation programs sponsored by these Districts.

New Scandia Township and Area School Districts have a synergistic relationship that allows them to work together to ensure that all residents in the Township have an excellent park system and recreation program. As budgets tighten, the need for open communication and cooperation will become even more critical. The School District's facilities and their relationship to the Township park system are described in more detail in Chapter 6: Recreation Facilities.

## **ATHLETIC, NON-PROFIT, AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

There are many active athletic, non-profit, and community organizations in New Scandia Township including Scandia Rider's Club, Forest Lake Area Athletic Association, Lakes Area Recreation Association, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4H Clubs, Campfire Organization, Osceola YMCA, St. Croix Cross Country Ski Club, to name just a few. These organizations can contribute a wealth of experience, knowledge, labor, and limited funding that can benefit the Township's park system. Conversely, New Scandia Township's park system can benefit these organizations by providing them with the facilities and opportunities they need or desire. It is critical that collaboration between the Township and other organizations be based on a shared vision of New Scandia's park system.

## **RESIDENTS AND LANDOWNERS**

New Scandia Township residents are critical to the success of the Township's park system. Collaboration and cooperation between the Township and its residents can ensure that the park system not only meets the needs of the residents, but it can also ensure that residents have the information and tools to help maintain the park and recreation system and enhance both public and private open space.

## **RECREATION TRENDS**

The Minnesota Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and the Metropolitan Council Leisure Survey provide general information about recreation trends in Minnesota. New Scandia Township may refer to these studies to help determine recreation trends and needs in the Township. However, it is important to note that the Metropolitan Council Leisure Survey was prepared in 1995. Emphasis on some trends will likely change over the years. Consequently, New Scandia Township may want to periodically update recreation trends and needs in the community.

### **1990-1994 MINNESOTA SCORP**

The 1990-1994 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) provides a general guide for development of outdoor recreation facilities in Minnesota. The '90-'94 SCORP is helpful in that it provides information on the types of recreation activities Minnesotans view as important. In addition, State and Federal agencies often review funding requests in relation to the SCORP. Therefore, it is important for New

Scandia Township to recognize how its park and open space needs generally relate to the SCORP.

Following is a summary of key findings from the 1990-1994 SCORP:

1. Minnesotans were asked to identify the importance of various recreation facilities. Facilities and activities dealing with natural areas are at the top of the list (see Table 2-A: Percentage of Minnesotans that View Recreation Activity as Important). Because New Scandia Township has a high percentage of undeveloped open space and several areas that contain significant natural communities, the Township has a unique opportunity to protect these remaining natural areas and, where appropriate, incorporate them into its comprehensive parks, trails, open space and recreation plan.
2. Based on a 1985 survey, Minnesotans spend an average of 225 hours per capita per year in outdoor recreation activities. Children between the ages of 7 and 14 spend the most time (345 hours per year) in participating in recreation activities. Generally, as age increases, the number of hours spent on outdoor recreation activities decreases. People over the age of 65 spend an average of 160 hours per year in outdoor recreation activities.

***Minnesotans view facilities and activities dealing with natural areas as a priority.***



Field Sports

The difference in time that each age class spends outdoors is important. The 2000 Census shows almost 29% of the population of New Scandia Township at age 19 or younger. Providing adequate recreation activities for children (athletic fields, areas for biking, and other active forms of recreation) is important. Likewise, 46% of the population was between the ages of 25 and 54. As these middle-aged adults grow older, they will spend more time in passive recreation activities like walking, hiking, nature observation, and golfing.

**Table 2-A: Percentage of Minnesotans that View Recreation Activity as Important** (Source: MNSCORP 1990-94)

1.	Natural Park Areas.....	91
2.	Wildlife and Nature Observation .....	89
3.	Walking Paths .....	84
4.	Picnic Grounds.....	83
5.	Nature and History Interpretation .....	82
6.	Swimming Beaches .....	82
7.	Lake Accesses .....	78
8.	Bicycle Paths and Trails .....	78



Skating Rink

9.	Paved Shoulders for Bicycles .....	76
10.	Flower Gardens.....	75
11.	Campgrounds .....	72
12.	Hiking Trails .....	72
13.	Athletic Fields.....	70
14.	Skating and Hockey Rinks .....	70
15.	Shore Fishing Areas.....	70
16.	River and Stream Access.....	65
17.	Cross Country Ski Trails .....	63
18.	Playgrounds.....	60
19.	Swimming Pools.....	58
20.	Downhill Ski Areas .....	52
21.	Tennis Courts .....	52
22.	Golf Courses.....	51
23.	Waterfowl Hunting Areas.....	47
24.	Snowmobile Trails .....	41
25.	Big Game Hunting Areas.....	41
26.	Basketball Courts .....	39
27.	Horseback Trails .....	38
28.	Upland Game Hunting Areas .....	36
29.	Shooting Ranges.....	29
30.	ATV Trails and Areas.....	25
31.	Field Dog Training Areas .....	20
32.	Scuba Diving Areas.....	20
33.	4WD Trails and Areas .....	17

***Roughly 73% of the time a Minnesotan spends on recreation is spent within one-half hour of home.***

Roughly 73% of the time a Minnesotan spends on recreation is spent within one-half hour of home. People prefer to participate in recreation activities that are close to home. It is especially important for children to have safe and easy access to recreation facilities. Furthermore, many adults who work long hours and commute to work have more time to participate in recreation activities that are closer to home. According to feedback from the Community Survey, over 60% of residents work outside of the Township. Given this, plus the concern of rising energy costs, the Plan should consider providing recreation opportunities close to existing and/or proposed residential developments.

- Trails are becoming an increasingly important part of recreation plans at all levels of government. New Scandia Township has a chance to provide trail connections to existing regional trails that are within or near the Township. Trails may also provide residents with

convenient access to proposed recreation areas throughout the Township.

### **2003-2008 MINNESOTA SCORP**

**Enjoying and Protecting Our Land & Water; Minnesota's 2003-2008 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)** provides an overview of outdoor recreation issues facing Minnesota and it describes policies and funding mechanisms to address those issues. Because state and federal agencies often review local funding requests in relation to the SCORP, it is important for the Township to recognize how its park system plan relates to the SCORP. The Minnesota SCORP has two guiding principles:

1. Encourage a better, highly integrated outdoor system that balances recreation and protection of natural and cultural resources; and
2. Strengthen the awareness of the connection between outdoor recreation and good health.

In addition, the 2003-2008 SCORP sets the following seven priorities:

1. Protect and restore the natural resources base on which outdoor recreation depends – Minnesota's lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, grasslands, and forests;
2. Sustain Minnesota's existing outdoor recreation facilities for future generations;
3. In areas of rapid population growth, reserve prime recreation lands – such as shoreland and significant natural areas – ahead of development and provide recreation facilities such as parks, trails, and water accesses;
4. Respond to the demands of Minnesota's changing population;
5. Expand nature-based outdoor recreation experiences for youth living in urban areas through "close-by" access to natural areas;
6. Improve coordination of the recreation-related activities of governmental and non-governmental providers; and
7. Understand the capacity of Minnesota's natural resources to support satisfying outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **METROPOLITAN COUNCIL LEISURE SURVEY**

The Metropolitan Council conducted a Leisure Survey in the Fall of 1995. The University of Minnesota Center for Survey Research surveyed a sample of 5,400 households in the seven county metropolitan region regarding their

interest and participation in leisure activities. The purpose of the study was to help local and regional governments in planning and implementing park systems.

One survey question asked households to identify leisure activities that they were interested in and had participated in at least once over the last 12 months. Table 2-B ranks the responses in order. Passive activities and activities related to natural areas were ranked highest.

**Table 2-B: Percent Interest and Participation in Activities in Last 12 Months** (Source: Metropolitan Council – 1996)



Walking in Natural Area

1. Walking in Natural Area/Large Park.....	57
2. Picnicking.....	52
3. Visiting Zoos.....	49
4. Visiting Conservatory, Arboretums, Gardens.....	39
5. Swimming or Sunbathing at a Beach.....	35
6. Informal Nature Observation.....	35
7. Camping.....	33
8. Fishing.....	29
9. Biking Paved Trails in Parks and Natural Areas.....	26
10. Power Boating and Water Skiing.....	23
11. Sledding.....	21
12. Jogging and Running.....	20
13. Non-Power Boating.....	19
14. Inline Skating, Skateboarding.....	14
15. Cross Country Skiing.....	12
16. Snowmobiling.....	10
17. Horseback Riding on Trails.....	6
18. Formal Nature Study.....	5

Another survey question asked households to identify leisure activities that they would like to participate in, but were limited in participating in because of cost, time constraints, or lack of facilities. Table 2-C ranks those responses in order. Again, many passive and nature oriented activities were ranked highest. Some activities, like horseback riding, were ranked higher than in Table 2-B. This suggests that more people would like to participate in other activities but they feel constrained by time, cost, or lack of facilities. The Township can help minimize these constraints by providing adequate facilities in conveniently accessed locations.

**Table 2-C: Percent Interest in Activity But Constrained in Participating** (Source Metropolitan Council – 1996)

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1. Visiting Zoos .....	31
2. Visiting Conservatories and Gardens.....	29
3. Fishing .....	27
4. Non-Power Boating.....	25
5. Camping .....	25
6. Biking Paved Trails in Natural Areas .....	23
7. Picnicking.....	22
8. Swimming or Sunbathing at a Beach .....	21
9. Walking in Natural Areas.....	21
10. Horseback Riding on Trails.....	19
11. Sledding.....	19
12. Power Boating and Water Skiing.....	17
13. Cross Country Skiing.....	16
14. Informal Nature Study .....	14
15. Snowmobiling.....	12
16. Inline Skating and Skateboarding .....	11
17. Jogging and Running .....	10
18. Formal Nature Study .....	9

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## RECREATION NEEDS

### NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STANDARDS

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) establishes standards to help communities in planning, acquisition, and development of park and open space. The NRPA standards are based on the number of recreation facilities (or acres of park land) per 1,000 people. For example, the NRPA standard for tennis courts is one tennis court for every 2,000 residents. Therefore, a Township of 10,000 people should have, based on this standard, five tennis courts (10,000 residents divided by 2,000 = 5 tennis courts). However, it is important to recognize that there are recreation trends, and that certain recreation activities are more significant in different regions. For example, tennis is currently not as popular as it once was. Therefore, national standards should be adjusted for local conditions.

NRPA standards serve as a tool to help guide New Scandia Township in providing a reasonable number of recreation facilities based on population. Again, it is important to note that these standards provide only a general guide. The Township should review and modify these standards in light of current conditions.

## EXISTING FACILITIES



*William O'Brien State Park*

The Township has the primary responsibility to provide recreation facilities for its residents. However, others can (and do) help address the area's recreation needs. Table 3-A: Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities, lists existing National, State, County, Township, private, and school district facilities in New Scandia Township. It shows that Scandia Elementary School provides most of the athletic fields in the community. While this certainly helps address some issues in New Scandia Township, the Township should not rely on the school district to meet its recreation needs. The school district's athletic fields are primarily for physical education classes and for organized school sports. Consequently, the school district's fields may not serve the needs of adults and organized sports not affiliated with the schools. For additional information, refer to Chapter 6: Recreation Facilities, for a detailed description of existing facilities.

## GENERAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The New Scandia Park & Recreation Committee began holding monthly meetings in September 2004 with consultants Sanders Wacker Bergly, Inc. (SWB) to begin the Comprehensive Park Plan process. At that time, the committee generated a list of issues and concerns that the Comprehensive Parks Plan could address:

### 1. PARKS:

- a. Maintenance
- b. Inventory of existing facilities
- c. Dedicated parkland vs. open space
- d. Conservation easements
- e. Does the township have enough parkland? Too much?
- f. What land to keep/ what to sell?
- g. Saving open space in the face of development pressure
- h. Desirable type of park system-central vs. network?
- i. Capital improvements

### 2. ATHLETIC FIELDS:

- a. Maintenance
- b. Inventory of existing facilities
- c. Capital improvements
- d. Current vs. anticipated use
- e. Adult vs. youth facilities

**3. SPORTS FACILITIES AND PLAYGROUNDS:**

- a. Maintenance
- b. Inventory of existing facilities
- c. Identify need for soccer, basketball, circuit training, swimming, racquetball, regional park, regional community 'Y' facility, climbing wall

**4. TRAILS (ON- AND OFF-ROAD):**

- a. Maintenance
- b. Inventory
- c. Connectivity
- d. Paved vs. unpaved
- e. Possibility of hosting Gateway Trail from village center
- f. Designated trail connections
- g. Respect wish to discourage trails from being routed through senior community
- h. Possibility of route through undeveloped shoreline

**5. OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL DIVERSITY PRESERVATION INCLUDING HABITAT CORRIDORS:**

- a. Maintenance
- b. Inventory
- c. Coordination with rural landscape preservation committee

**6. WATER RESOURCES (WETLANDS, LAKES, GROUND WATER):**

- a. Maintenance
- b. Inventory
- c. Protection

**7. YOUTH PROGRAMS:**

- a. Neighborhood vs. central systems and programs

**8. ANCILLARY ASPECTS OF THE PLAN:**

- a. Develop a strong and clear vision for parks, trails, open space and recreational facilities in New Scandia Township
- b. Cooperation with county, school district, state and federal agencies, adjacent communities, private land owners and land preservation entities
- c. Township lands not designated as parks or public use areas
- d. Develop/refine goals and strategies (guiding principles) to help guide developers, the Park and Recreation Committee and the Town Board in park issues related to current development



Lacrosse Camp

- e. Develop a clear understanding of when cash in lieu of land is appropriate

For additional information, look for specific issues, opportunities, goals and strategies as they relate to each plan component (i.e. Parks) in their respective chapters.

## **THE 2004 NEW SCANDIA TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY SURVEY**

In order to best determine what New Scandia Township residents really wanted for their park system, the Park and Recreation Committee distributed a community survey to get a sense of what the community valued, used and prioritized as being important to their recreation needs.

The community survey provided the following:

- The features and qualities that residents value most about New Scandia Township's parks, recreation and open space system.
- Existing facilities New Scandia Township residents use most often.
- Comment on the quality of existing NST facilities.
- Perceived threats to the quality of life in the Township.

Community surveys were distributed to every household in New Scandia Township. There were 504 respondents; approximately 39% of the total number of households in the Township responded to the survey. Community response is as follows:

1. High priorities for most respondents (almost 60%) include preserving open space, natural areas and rural character<sup>1</sup>. Parks and trails are not far behind. Development is a serious concern for many.

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<sup>1</sup>Rural character' refers to the patterns of land use and development established by a (township) in the rural element of its comprehensive plan:

- (a) In which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;
- (b) That foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and

2. Top five (5) activities reported were walking/jogging/running, fishing, cycling, swimming and boating.
3. The most-used facility was listed as boat landings.
4. Most frequent requests include the preservation of rural character of the Township, to improve trails and their respective connections, to improve youth, adult and disabled programs.
5. Most frequent complaints include too much development, fear of ‘cluster’ development, loss of open space and natural areas, and not wanting the community to turn into another faceless suburb.
6. When asked to rank the township’s recreational facilities, many respondents replied in effect “I can’t rate them; I don’t know what we have.”

For more information, please see Appendix B: 2004 New Scandia Township Community Survey for complete survey content, accompanied with corresponding feedback.

Throughout the development of the Comprehensive Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Park and Recreation Committee continually referred to the feedback from the community survey in helping to set the Plan direction and priorities.

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- opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;
  - (c) That provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities;
  - (d) That are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;
  - (e) That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;
  - (f) That generally do not require the extension of urban governmental services; and
  - (g) That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and ground water and surface water recharge and discharge areas.

<http://nh.gov/oep/resourcelibrary/referencelibrary/r/ruralcharacter/washingtonstatedefinesruralcharacter.htm>

## **A VISION FOR NEW SCANDIA TOWNSHIP'S PARKS, TRAILS, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION SYSTEM**

The following vision statement is based on input from a workshop held in December of 2004, which included members from the Park and Recreation Committee, the Town Board and the School District. A vision statement serves to express a preferred future. It speaks to what the Township wants to preserve and enhance. It also helps establish goals and strategies for the community. New Scandia Township should periodically review and update the vision statement to ensure that it remains relevant.

*“We envision New Scandia Township’s parks, trails, open space and recreation system will preserve our rural character, protect our natural beauty and recognize our history.*

*We support our Community Center as the heart of New Scandia Township from which a strong network of parks and trails extend throughout the township and beyond to serve the needs and desires of all residents.*

*We value the natural environment of the Lower St. Croix River Valley and recognize that the River is a unique regional asset and national icon.*

*We encourage the stewardship of our lakes, streams, wetlands, woodlands, prairies and agricultural lands toward a healthy ecology that supports a diversity of habitat and recreation opportunities.*

*We strive for New Scandia’s parks, trails, open space, recreation facilities and programs to be appropriate across all age and ability levels.*

*We will promote New Scandia Township’s Comprehensive Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Plan to be a versatile and innovative guide for our future growth, while encouraging compatible development and preserving significant open space as a complement to the New Scandia Comprehensive Plan.”*

-Adopted by New Scandia Township’s Town Board

18 July 2006